BISS Biodiversity Information Science and Standards

Biodiversity Information Science and Standards 2: e27006
doi: 10.3897/biss.2.27006

OPEN ACCESS

Conference Abstract

# The Treasure of George Vernon Hudson

Julia Kasper‡, Phil Sirvid‡

‡ Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington, New Zealand

Corresponding author: Julia Kasper (julia.kasper@tepapa.govt.nz)

Received: 28 May 2018 | Published: 13 Jun 2018

Citation: Kasper J, Sirvid P (2018) The Treasure of George Vernon Hudson. Biodiversity Information Science and Standards 2: e27006. https://doi.org/10.3897/biss.2.27006

## Abstract

George V. Hudson, born 1867 in London, developed a strong interest in nature when he was nine years old and began collecting insects. At the age of 13 he wrote and illustrated his first manuscript on insects.

In 1881 Hudson moved to New Zealand, where he worked as a clerk in the post office in Wellington until his retirement in 1919. However, he kept collecting, investigating and describing insects in his spare time, and was determined to present New Zealand's insect fauna to the general public. He was critical of the formal education system and provided alternative methods of learning through his books. His achievements place him among New Zealand's distinguished pioneer naturalists.

After Hudson's death in April 1946, his collection of insects, one of the largest and most valuable private collection in New Zealand, was donated to the Dominion Museum with the condition that it remained intact in its nine original cabinets. These are made from kauri and are full of neatly pinned in sects, Hudson invented his own coding system for labelling his specimens. The numbers that refer to each specimen were recorded in three volumes of register books, where he noted details about the samples. These registers are the only way we can understand the collection. However, since Hudson had a very idiosyncratic handwriting and wrote between lines when he ran out of space, his registers are very hard to read. Also, he changed names, deleted numbers of specimens that were given away and reused those numbers. In short, these registers were living documents that changed with the collection.

© Kasper J, Sirvid P. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

This collection is of immense scientific value and it has been well protected in climate-controlled conditions, although quite inaccessible for many years. Now, the kauri cabinets are secured to shelving units bolted to the floor and a wall. This provides protection against flooding and earthquake hazards. The registers and the specimens in the drawers are part of a digitisation program. All the information on the aging register pages were scanned in high resolution. It is now possible to magnify the writing and transfer the data into a database without touching the vulnerable originals. It is also possible to share the scanned pages with volunteers and experts, who can help deciphering Hudson's notes. The plan is to make some of the pages available online, as part of a citizen science project.

## Keywords

Collection access and use, Digitisation, Volunteers

## Presenting author

Julia Kasper